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# Shall We Educate Our Homemakers?

Wilma Fortsch

Several years ago a certain young married woman took part in a debate on the subject: "Resolved: that a college education unfits a woman for matrimony." That evening, having come off with the laurels of the occasion, she was gloating to her husband that she had proved beyond a doubt that college does not unfit a woman for home responsibilities, when to her horror he very quietly and emphatically replied, "That may all be true in theory, but it does unfit her in practice."

What can we say? Was he right, or was she? Has the education of the woman of today made her a failure as a homemaker, or has the man of today simply failed to keep up with her in his view of changing conventions? To be sure, the good old days are gone for ever. Now-a-days the aroma of crusty bread and crisp raisin-filled cookies has been changed to a two burner electric plate, guaranteed smokeless, odorless, and time-saving. Divorce lists grow longer and longer. What has happened?

In the formation of anything new, two things have their effect—emulation on the one hand, and custom and convention on the other. Emulation is my desire to have everything equal or superior to that of my neighbor. If the housewife next door gets a new electric range, then must I needs have one just like it, except that mine must be in the new sea-green color, thus putting me at least one notch ahead of her white-enameled possession.

Up to certain point this spirit of emulation is effective, then slowly custom and convention step in. "Time to stop," it seems to say, "Don't go much further or people will talk—You'll be 'queer' instead of 'oh, so original!'"

By these two means then, people's ideas change, and the rugs which were once our joy and pride get changed for Jaspe Congoleum, number 123. Emulation and convention affect us in every phase of our home life,—our clothes, our home furnishings, the education of our children, even our religion and the building in which we worship.

To begin with our clothes, we wear short skirts, high heels, sheer hose and sleeveless dresses. Women of but a few years ago wore dresses sweep-

ing the ground, with immense sleeves and pinched-in waists. They were "the glass of fashion and the mold of form," now we say that such raiment was ludicrous, unsanitary and harmful. So quickly has the pendulum of fashion swung in the opposite direction.

Our ideas of home, too, are rapidly changing. The conventionally clean house, the pride of the old time "good" housekeeper, was a gleaming spotless perfection, for the maintenance of which father smoked his pipe in the basement and the children kept their toys in the attic. Now-a-days our ideas have changed to: "better a two room flat where comfort is than a palace of untouchable perfection."

Convention says our children must be educated, and to this end we strive, push, and drag them thru college, whether or no. We will not, even to ourselves, admit that a successful bricklayer is better than a second rate lawyer. Our children must have "white collar" positions or our job of rearing them has been a social failure.

Even in religion, the ideal which is nearest our hearts, we are swayed by traditions. Always, from time immemorial, churches have been associated in our minds with tall spires, lofty arches, and stained glass windows. We are shocked at the idea of a church building given over in part to offices, and commercial firms. The very ritual and symbolism of our church today is based on convention and tradition. The struggle in our churches today is not against religion itself, not a disbelief in the basic truths of the church, but a fight against the conventions and traditions with which it is surrounded.

In this day of unrest and dissatisfaction, slowly but surely conventions are being changed. New ones are coming to take their places. To quote Lee Arthur Stone:—"If the progressive things that should live and be of benefit to all mankind and be of aid in raising of higher ideals are to come, men and women must stand together and put forth their best efforts toward developing the young, in order that they may profit by, and not repeat the mistakes their elders made by stunting their intellectual development. Knowledge and intellectual

power are bound to replace tradition, myth, and superstition." Knowledge and intellectual power will come only thru education. The educated homemaker is, therefore, the one who will be most successful in keeping a happy unbroken home, in tune with changing conventions.

## Electricity as a Time Saver

Every modern housewife, anxious for the labor and time saving devices which will help to make her more efficient in her round of daily duties, realizes the value of electricity in the farm household. Her husband will probably agree with her, if the new equipment may be purchased at a cost which will not burst the family purse strings.

The question of which type of equipment to buy for the rural home has been answered, partially at least, by a group of farmers living near Garner, with a project which for four years has been carried on under the supervision of the Engineering Experiment Station of Iowa State College in co-operation with the National Committee on rural electrification. A variety of electrical appliances was placed on eleven farm homes for use under real farm conditions. The kilowatt hour consumption of each piece of equipment was recorded in an accurate and detailed manner.

All the cooperators agreed that lighting is of first importance in the farm home, regardless of the money to be invested. If only a small sum of money was to be spent, the smaller equipment was chosen first. Because of its low initial and upkeep cost, the electric iron was chosen first in an investment of \$200. Its advantages over the old range heated iron are many. It eliminates the care of the stove during the ironing procedure and saves endless steps, besides making it easy to keep the kitchen at a comfortable working temperature.

Third place was given to the household motor to run the washer and cream separator, with the vacuum cleaner and small equipment such as percolator, toaster, hot plate, fan and heating pad next in choice. The farm women found the toasters especially satisfactory as time savers, because they make it possible for other members of the family to make toast at the breakfast table, thus saving countless steps to the kitchen.